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ABSTRACT

THE FOLLOWING IS THE FULL TEXT OF THIS DOCUMENT: The last bell rings at 4 o'clock and kids come tumbling out of classrooms, eager to be free for the weekend. As lockers bang shut and chatter fades out the front door, one teacher sighs, "Thank God it's Thursday." Thursday? For the 250 students and 16 teachers in this southwestern Oregon farming community, Thursday marks the end of the school week in an experimental program that packs the three R's into four days. Started last fall to save money on heating, lighting and busing, the four-day school week appeals to teachers who enjoy long weekends and parents who say their children are more enthusiastic about school. "We're still on a trial basis," said Bob Brown, chairman of the Days Creek school board. "But we haven't had one complaint to the board against it. Basically, we figure everyone must be satisfied." The four-day school week is gaining acceptance in rural school districts, as administrators search for ways to cut budgets without cutting staff. Scattered districts in 13 states now operate on an abbreviated week, with the largest number in Colorado, said Paul Bauman, policy analyst for the Denver-based Education Commission of the States. In at least two other states, legislation has been introduced to permit four-day school weeks, he said. There have been no major studies analyzing the success of the four-day school week nationwide, said Bauman. A 1981 study of Colorado schools concluded that the system needed more time before it could be fairly evaluated, he said. Nationwide, the four-day week is limited to rural school districts, where many students spend their days off helping on the family ranch or farm, Bauman said. The grandfather of the four-day week is the 400-student Cimarron, N.M. school district, where a Tuesday-through-Friday schedule has been in effect for 10 years. Superintendent Joe Pompeo says that community would fire him if he switched back to a five-day week. In Oregon, Days Creek and Prospect, about 45 miles northeast of Medford, are winding up a one-year trial program approved by state school Superintendent Verne Duncan. Both districts want to keep the schedule and officials in Rogue River say they are considering a four-day week. Shifting to a shorter week required the Oregon school districts to get a one-year waiver from a state regulation that students spend 175 days a year in the classroom. (Author)

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School fits three Rs into four days

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